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PREPARATORY COMMITTEE FOR THE
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
Second session
Geneva 18 March-5 April 1991
Agenda item 2

PREPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT ON THE BASIS OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 44/228 AND TAKING INTO ACCOUNT OTHER RELEVANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS

Report of the Secretary-General of the Conference

Addendum

Introductory statement made by the Secretary-General of the Conference at the second session of the Preparatory Committee

First, let me join the Chairman in welcoming you to this opening session of the second substantive meeting of the Preparatory Committee. As you know, this plenary session is designed to deal with the adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters. Accordingly, this is not the time to address the principal substantive matters with which the plenary must deal and I will reserve my own comments on these substantive matters for the statement I expect to make at the beginning of the plenary session on Tuesday 2 April.

I think, however, it would be useful for me to make a few comments now on matters related to the organization of our work. It will be evident from the extensive documentation provided for this session that you face a heavy and challenging work programme. The Preparatory Committee at its first substantive session at Nairobi gave us, as you know, a substantial number of assignments. Responding to these and to the guidance and direction given to

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us by the Preparatory Committee in virtually every area of our work, has imposed a highly demanding work-load on our secretariat and its working partners, particularly given the short time we had to do this work. In some cases, the full response to the assignments given to us in the decisions of the Preparatory Committee Meeting at Nairobi will be reflected in the documents for the third substantive session in August. Thanks to the fine co-operation of and special efforts made by the co-operating agencies, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system and the other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that have contributed to our substantive work, you have before you a set of documents which I trust will provide a sound and useful basis for your deliberations. The fact that despite Herculean efforts on our part and that of the translation service, much of this documentation has come to you late is something I deeply regret. The intervention of the holiday season slowed up the process much more than we had expected.

This Preparatory Committee is of exceptional importance. For it marks the transition from the overview and analysis of the issues on which the Nairobi session concentrated to identification of potential areas for action. It is these potential areas for action on which we hope that this session, and particularly the Working Groups, will focus their primary attention. What is now needed most is the guidance and direction of the Preparatory Committee and its Working Groups on what these areas of action should include and where the primary emphasis should be placed in developing in these areas the specific proposals for action to be included in "Agenda 21".

I should point out that the potential areas for action identified in our documents do not represent recommendations by the secretariat or the working parties it has convened on each of these issues, but rather a "menu" of the possibilities that have been identified in the course of our work in responding to the deliberations and decisions of your first substantive session.

We envisage that the primary task of the secretariat and its working partners following this session will be to formulate, based on the results of this session, specific action proposals to be considered at the next session in August. It would be especially helpful, therefore, if the Working Groups could concentrate on the potential areas for action pointed out in the relevant documents for each of the issues they are considering, indicate what additional areas might be added, if any of those raised should be reformulated or deleted, and the priorities for specific actions in each area. The guidance and direction of the Preparatory Committee and its Working Groups at this session is absolutely essential if you are to have before you at the third substantive session in August the specific proposals for action which will require your decision for inclusion in "Agenda 21".

What I have just said applies primarily to the issues being considered by Working Groups I and II which will, as you know, be including in their work consideration of the cross-sectoral aspects of each of the substantive issues they will be addressing. The results of the deliberations of the Working Groups on these matters will then make an important contribution to the overall consideration of the cross-sectoral issues by the Preparatory Committee. It is, in my view, of the highest importance that detailed discussion of these key cross-sectoral issues be undertaken at the third substantive session and that they be the primary focus of the fourth session.

The decision that Governments be represented at the 1992 Conference at the level of Heads of State or Government underlines the importance attaching to the work of this Preparatory Committee and the exceptional demands that will be made upon it in the less than 15 months that remain between now and June 1992.

Let me say at this point how pleased I am at the arrangements being made by the Government of Brazil for hosting the Conference. We have established very close, co-operative and congenial relationships with the Brazilian Authorities, including the State and City governments of Rio de Janeiro which give us full confidence that the facilities and arrangements they are providing for the Conference, and the welcome they are preparing for its participants, will provide the most auspicious setting possible for this first Earth Summit. You will have the opportunity of hearing more fully and directly about these arrangements from our Brazilian hosts at the informal briefing they will give us for this purpose on Wednesday, 3 April.

As you know, it was decided at the first substantive session of the Preparatory Committee in Nairobi that this session would continue through Friday, 5 April, with provision being made for the possibility of extending the session into the week beginning Monday, 8 April. The Easter Holiday, which comes within this period, reduces the number of working days available by two. Nevertheless, I would hope that the Preparatory Committee might take a timely decision as to whether this session is to be extended into the fourth week to enable delegations to make their plans rather than having the matter remain uncertain until the latter part of the scheduled session.

The Chairman has already commented on the two important issues arising out of decisions of the first substantive session in Nairobi which have been the subject of informal consultations preceding this session, which must now take decisions concerning them. The first of these is the decision concerning the terms of reference and timing for the commencement of the work of Working Group III on legal, institutional and all related matters. Informal consultations on this matter are continuing and I am, therefore, not yet in a position to submit the report, with appropriate recommendations including draft terms of reference, requested of me by the Preparatory Committee at its first session. But in the light of the very great importance of the issues to be dealt with by this Working Group, I believe it is essential that agreement be reached on its terms of reference within the next day or two so that it can be constituted and its work commenced by Tuesday, 2 April. If this is not done, I need not point out that it will constitute a major set-back to the preparatory process.

The other matter is the role of non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process which was discussed extensively at both the Organizational Session of the Preparatory Committee in New York last March and its first substantive session at Nairobi last August. As you know, the arrangements agreed at the first substantive session at Nairobi for participation of non-governmental organizations in that session were subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly which authorized the Preparatory Committee to apply these same arrangements to participation by non-governmental organizations in future meetings of the Preparatory Committee and its Working Groups. I am sure you share with me a sense of the importance attaching now to giving effect to this decision taken by this Committee in Nairobi after such full and long

deliberations in agreeing on "broad-based involvement by relevant non-governmental organizations".

The relationship between the UNCED preparatory process and the processes of negotiating conventions, particularly climate change and biodiversity, will be the subject of consideration in Working Group I. But I do want to point out at this time that at the secretariat level we have been consulting closely with our colleagues in the other United Nations agencies and organizations which are providing support for these negotiating processes, including the newly-established secretariat to support the intergovernmental negotiations for the climate change convention, to ensure full harmonization of these negotiating processes and possible negotiations in respect of forestry, with the related preparatory work for UNCED, particularly in respect of "Agenda 21".

I do hope these comments may be of some help as you begin the work of this important session, and particularly that of Working Groups I and II. I and my colleagues will have the opportunity to provide further information and comments on the various substantive items you will be addressing as your work progresses. And, of course, we look forward to the pleasure of serving you and sharing with you the challenging task we face in this session which is such a critically important milestone along the road to the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992.